Declassified and Approved For Release 2012/01/10 : CIA-RDP90-00965R000100120075-9

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE E-11

WASHINGTON POST
21 June 1985

JACK ANDERSON and DALE VAN ATTA

Time to Clear Out Security Clearances

The Pentagon has announced in the wake of the Walker family spy case that it will try to reduce by 10 percent the 4.3 million security clearances now held by employes of the military-industrial complex. Better late than never.

A good place to start would be the million-plus people who are employed by defense contractors and have been granted access to classified documents—particularly the 115,000 civilians who have been given "top secret" security clearances.

A Dec. 10, 1984, internal report by the special Pentagon Industrial Security Review Commission, obtained by our associate Tony Capaccio, suggests that a significant number of defense-contractor employes who are cleared to see highly classified documents have no need to.

Regarding the employes cleared for top secret, the report adds: "Perhaps 90,000-95,000 of the 115,000 clearances do not have continuous access to top-secret information. In fact, probably no more than 35,000 to 40,000 of the contractor personnel cleared at the top-secret level have ever had access to top-secret information."

Yet the defense contractors keep asking that more and more employes be cleared to handle sensitive material. The Pentagon report noted a 44 percent increase in "top secret," "secret" and "confidential" clearances from 1979 to 1983, and a disturbing tendency for overworked investigators to "clear anyone" the contractors want cleared. Though it attributes some of the huge increase in security clearances to the Reagan administration's "rearmament program," the review panel found no noticeable decline during the last two years of the Carter administration.

Why have defense contractors swamped the government with clearance requests? "Contractors are faced with powerful incentives to process their employes for clearance and to clear them at the highest conceivable level," the report explains.

Contractors "who have succeeded in holding clearance requests to a minimum are often victimized by the system for having done so," the report observes, because they are put at a "distinct competitive disadvantage" against companies that, "by abusing the system, have an ample supply of cleared personnel to perform on new, classified contracts."

The report makes clear that the contractors won't reduce the number of security clearances on their own. It points out, for example, that Pentagon regulations already suggest downgrading the security clearance of employes who haven't used their top-secret clearances for 18 months. But fewer than 6,000 were downgraded in 1983.

"The number of top-secret clearances continues to grow even though the need for top-secret access is no longer justified" in many cases, the review panel stated. It said "literally thousands of unwarranted personnel security clearances" exist.

The review panel also questioned whether the growth of business firms given security clearance "is fully justified." It noted that possibly 1,000 or 2,000 of the 13,000 businesses holding security clearances "perform toilet cleaning, painting and similar maintenance."

Declassified and Approved For Release 2012/01/10 : CIA-RDP90-00965R000100120075-9